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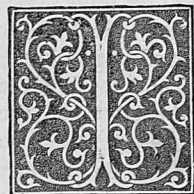
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The MUSICAL AMATEUR



HINTS ON PURCHASING MUSIC.



HAVE been led to conclude that purchasing music is a subject which might be of general interest to my readers. Yet how to approach and to treat such a topic has been to me a matter of considerable doubt and thought.

To give suggestions as to the choosing and purchasing of an instrument was comparatively easy; there are certain qualities of tone, touch, and endurance which are recognized by all as necessarily appertaining to a good piano (the instrument of which I wrote), irrespective of slight individual differences of opinion on minor matters—such as the case—which rendered it possible to give definite advice on the subject. But how attempt to advise a large circle of readers on a matter the decision of which depends almost entirely upon the individual taste of the purchaser? Yet even here is a chance for a little assistance, a few suggestions, especially to those who, not living in large cities, have not at hand a large repertoire from which to select.

It must be understood, however, at the outset, that this article is not addressed to those for whom music is only an ear-tickling amusement, unworthy of serious consideration as an elevating and severe art, but to those who respect it as a subject worthy of earnest study and capable of affording, as such study progresses, a continually increasing pleasure, both intellectual and sensuous (not “sensual,” be it understood). Therefore the lovers and upholders of the “Sweet Bye and Bye” and “Come Home, Father” class of publications would better skip this article; it will afford them neither instruction nor gratification.

The music we purchase may be divided into four classes,

First, material for technical study; this includes scales and five-finger exercises, the so-called “daily studies” compiled by various authors, and most so-called “exercises.”

Second, material for mental and artistic study; this includes systems of harmony and counterpoint, many so-called “exercises” or “studies,” and all the serious works of the great masters, ancient and modern.

Third, the music we adopt for the general pleasure of our circle of friends and social acquaintance.

Fourth, that which we use for our own private enjoyment and that of a chosen few supremely musical friends.

It may be roughly stated that our first and third and our second and fourth classes respectively belong together as practice and performance.

All these four classes are necessary, and the purchases in each class need to be carefully considered by every person whose means and available storage-room are in any way limited; for the rapidity with which music, bought piece by piece, accumulates to an immense aggregate is astonishing.

Concerning the choice of music belonging to our first class there is comparatively little to be said. All compositions and compilations belonging to this class have for their one and sole object the production of digital dexterity; the only gradation in their excellence is that of the greater or lesser rapidity with which they lead towards this goal.

Some works of this class are arranged as though man had—as in the very ancient days—his six, or so, hundred years of life before him, and could, in consequence, devote the first hundred to preparatory study. First purchase Plaidy’s “Technical Studies.” The work on these should commence with the beginner’s earliest lessons. Excellent as these studies are, they are open to the objection stated at the commencement of this paragraph. Any skilful and experienced teacher will, however, greatly shorten this long road by many judiciously chosen skips, these skips varying in the case of almost each pupil; for while there is nothing in the work which is unnecessary, there is also no pupil for which all is necessary—an apparent paradox which will clear itself up after a little thought. This work (with, perhaps, Tausig’s “Daily Studies”) will be the pupil’s permanent companion so long as he may live and play. Soon afterwards will come into use the exercises of Schmitt and Duvernoy. These lead to the easier exercises of Czerny, which are the stepping-stone to the same composer’s “Studies in Velocity.” After these come, in their order, Cramer’s “Studies,” Clementi’s “Gradus ad Parnassum,” Bach’s “Well-tempered Clavichord,” and the studies of Liszt.

In the second class there is a far wider field for choice. Some of the studies of Loeschorn (say, for example, Op. 52) may come under this head, though they are rather hard to classify, as they comprise numbers belonging purely to the first class. All the Heller studies come into this class, and should all be purchased and used in the following order: Op. 45, Op. 47, Op. 46. The latest book (Op. 124, I think, though I have it not at hand to refer to) may be omitted; if used, its place is between Op. 47 and Op. 46. The Thalberg studies, “L’Art du Chant,” the Henselt and Chopin studies, and the fugitive ones of Tausig, all belong in this class, and should be possessed and practised by all piano students. In addition to these well-known works there are many by Raff (Deux Études Melodiques), Rubinstein, Berens (Op. 77), Haberbier (Op. 45, Op. 53, and Op. 59—these last two especially), and the “Romance-Étude” of Wm. Mason. So much for “studies,” pure and simple. To these may be added the Sonatas of Kuhlau, Krause, Lichner, Seiss, and Kullak; the Sonatinas of Clementi; the Suites of Bach, Handel, Raff, and Jadassohn; all the Mozart and Beethoven Sonatas; the six Preludes and Fugues of Mendelssohn; the Preludes of Chopin; an Improvisata and Fugue by Brüll; and “Eight Piano Pieces” and a Suite by Bargiel. Of course, this list is the merest hint; but any one possessing the above-named works will not lack material for interesting study for some time to come. As to the theoretical part of this second class, I hope the system of Harmony now being published in this magazine will be at once sufficiently concise and yet sufficiently thorough to meet the demands of students; and Counterpoint (fascinating as the study is) would better be let alone until Harmony is mastered.

In exploring this first and second class, I have been travelling, at least, within sight of land; I am now about to enter on a boundless ocean of possibilities,

and my only compass (individual tastes) is one whose variations it is impossible to calculate.

Our third class of music is intimately connected with our first, because the ordinary class of listeners has come to care for nothing but finger dexterity, with just enough melody struggling its way through the general babble and crash to redeem the noise from utter lack of meaning. The endeavor of our earnest piano-player must, therefore, be to choose for general social performance such pieces as combine real musical excellence with sufficient brilliant and telling passages of execution to astonish the unthinking. Fortunately, this class of music, by the very necessities of its directness and constructive simplicity, will cause our thorough student to waste but a short time in its acquirement. The general endeavor of the writers of “salon” pieces is to produce the effect of the greatest brilliance and difficulty at the least possible expenditure of real enduring power or executive ability. Fashions in this class of music are continually changing, the surest possible proof of its ephemeral and unsound character. The endless and brilliant variations of Henri Herz were once all the rage, now no one plays them or would listen to them if played; but who has yet heard of Beethoven or Mozart going out of fashion? There are present signs of another change of fashion; but everywhere, except in one or two fortunately-situated and large cities, the parlor performer may feel moderately safe in using the operatic arrangements of Leybach, Ketterer, Thalberg (perhaps), and Liszt (certainly); the Waltzes of Schulhoff; the Mazurkas of Ketterer; the Tarantelles, Saltarello, Concert Galop, Military Polonaise, and Barcarolle Venetienne of S. B. Mills; the Polkas, Silver Spring, and Caprice Galop of Mason; the Military Polonaise of Chopin; the Valse-Étude, Cachucha Caprice, and Polka de la Reine of Raff; the various writings of Bendel (except his Ballade, which is far too poetic for a mixed audience); the Rhapsodies Hongroises of Liszt, and, in fact, most of Liszt’s works except the Consolations, which are, like Bendel’s Ballade, too poetic; and all the concert galops, polkas, and waltzes he can lay his hands upon. Beware of attempting anything poetic (unless it comes in some such well-known and sentimental form as the Spring-song of Mendelssohn) or contrapuntal to a mixed audience; and, above all, see that your selection ends with a few brilliant runs and a bang and a crash: your ordinary listener will even pardon a little, a *very* little, really good work in the middle of a piece, if it only winds up with a sufficiency of noise. In naming pieces for use in the social circle, I have named none so trashy as to disgust a real musician; of course, when I say “all the concert galops, polkas, and waltzes,” I open the door to some questionable possibilities, but a brief examination of a composition of this class will usually tell a purchaser if a thing is too unmusically execrable to be endured.

And now as to our last class. Here I can only deal in generalities; for the music one will play for one’s own delight must be the music of one’s own choice. But I can help some distracted village purchaser by giving him a list of composers whose works he may order with the certainty of never getting bad or unworthy work; and after one or two trials he will quickly settle on those composers who most move and satisfy him. It will be well for any one situated outside of large cities to write to the principal publishing houses for catalogues. Most of these catalogues contain some means of approximating the difficulty of unknown works, so that one who can but comfortably compass one of the easier tone-poems of St. Heller need not find himself suddenly confronted by the bewildering difficulties of a Tausig-Strauss waltz.

Here are a few out of the many composers whose names may be taken as a guarantee of honest and worthy work. (I omit, of course, the recognized classic composers; their names “go without saying,” as the French put it.) Rubinstein, Raff, Goldmark,

Reinecke, Bargiel, Jadassohn, Grieg, Henselt, St. Heller, Kirchner, Svendsen, Gade, Wm. Mason (the 1st Ballade and the Réverie Poétique), Jensen, Benedict, Sterndale-Bennett, Zimmermann, Rheinberger, Silas (Gavotte), Dupont, (Gavotte, Bourrée and Saraband), H. Bartlett (2 Mazurkas Op. 33), Heinrich Hoffmann, and Rudolph Niemann. To these may be added certain works by F. Korbay and F. Brandeis.

Down to this point I have written entirely for piano-players. I have now a few words for our amateur vocalists.

The amateur pianist has, as a rule, some faint idea of the extent of his capabilities; but the amateur vocalist, alas! rarely has. How many times I have heard singers (?) who, to save their necks, could not have sung a simple scale with pure intonation, attack the "Shadow-song" from "Dinorah," or Proch's "Air with Variations," with a cool assurance which would have drawn tears of envy from a Di Murska or a Gerster!

To the amateur vocalist I have at present little to say; I have so usually found him (or her) so far beyond and above all offers of criticism or suggestion; but I should like, in the humblest manner, with eyes abased and hat in hand, to offer a few hints in regard, also, to the purchase of a repertoire for singers.

I will leave the operatic field entirely aside; it is well known and well worn. As long as there are amateurs, they will undoubtedly persist in scrambling complacently through arias which trained prime donne approach with caution.

I should like, nevertheless, to suggest that, when they feel inclined to abandon their lop-sided Pegasus and condescend to solid earth, they may safely venture on any of the songs of Sullivan, Tours, Barnby, Schubert, Franz, Schumann, Raff, Rubinstein, Brahms, Hatton, Chopin, Kirchner, Benedict, Molloy, and Pease, and feel sure that they are doing worthy musical work. That they will necessarily be successful I do not dare to predict; the very faults which their abortive attempts at execution obscure and, for the ordinary listener, utterly conceal will become painfully prominent under the rigorous test of a ballad. It is not generally known that to sing a ballad well is infinitely more difficult, and demands a greater command of the vocal organs and a larger amount of musical and general cultivation, than half the fly-away Italian arias; but it is a fact. Di Murska proved what an artist she was when she sang a simple song of Abt's, and Gerster showed what an artist she was *not* when she failed in a similar trial. But if I commence on the idiosyncrasies and sins of vocalists, I open a subject far too extensive to be tackled on at the end of an article already too long; I will leave it for future consideration.

As to our amateur friends who boldly attempt the violin, the flute, the cornet, and other melodic instruments, I will say a few words to them in a future number.

C. F.

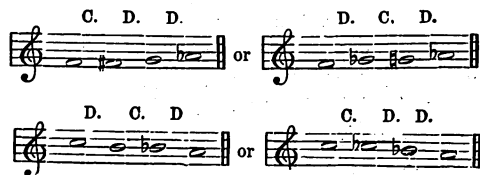
LESSONS IN HARMONY.

No. II.

It is to be supposed that the student has thoroughly familiarized himself with the appearance of the semitone and tone in all their aspects. It must never be forgotten that on a perfect familiarity with the construction and appearance of the various intervals depends the pupil's rapidity and sureness of advance when the succeeding studies of scales and chords are attacked.

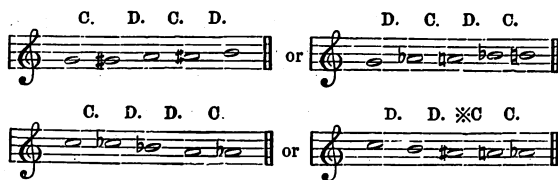
If the tone and semitone have been rehearsed as they should be, upwards and downwards, and starting from every degree of the scale, from sharps, from flats, even from double sharps and double flats, the pupil is now ready for another lesson, and shall have it.

The next interval to the *tone* is the *minor third*, which consists of one chromatic and two diatonic semitones. It may as well be remarked here, once for all, that it makes no difference in what *order* the diatonic and chromatic semitones present themselves in the formation and study of intervals; it is only necessary that there be the right number of each. For example, in this interval of the *minor third*, the diatonic semitone may come first, followed by a chromatic and then by the other diatonic, or the chromatic may come first, followed by the two diatonics, thus:



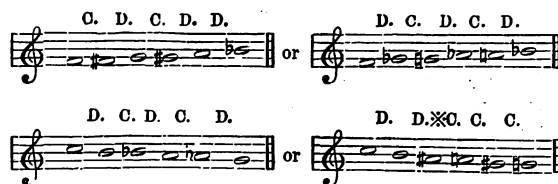
In reference to the first example, it may be remarked that although on a piano the effect would be the same were the A \sharp written as G \sharp , in harmony it is a different matter; and the interval then presented would be not a minor third, but quite another one with which we have at present nothing to do.

After the *minor third* comes the *major third*. This consists of two diatonic and two chromatic semitones.



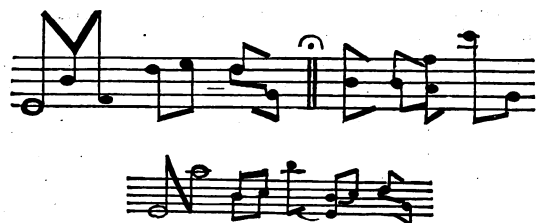
(The A \sharp marked * is only thus written to show that this notation is possible; B \sharp would, of course, be preferable.)

Now comes the interval of the *fourth*, which contains three diatonic and two chromatic semitones, thus:



(Here the A \sharp marked * is perfectly legitimate and correct; because the same kind of notation—by sharps and naturals—is logically carried out.)

With these new intervals, which involve a good deal of writing if faithfully worked at, and a good deal of hard thinking in the keys with many sharps or flats in their signatures, the student has probably quite as much as he can do at present. With practice comes ease, and we will next complete our study of simple intervals, as the student will then be ready for the rest of them.



AFTER the Mapleson orchestral troubles comes a new fuss with the Sullivan "Pinafore" orchestra. The facts in the two cases are almost identical. In both we have a certain amount of work agreed upon for a certain amount of pay. In both one of the contracting parties waits until the last instant and then dishonestly refuses to fulfil its part of the agreement. Against this society tyranny there is but one course for managers to take. Let them agree never to engage a man who has participated in these swindling contract farces; let them keep a kind of "black-book" in which shall be entered the name of every such participant, and let the contents of this book be common managerial property. When the orchestra player learns, by one or two experiences, that in attempting to overreach one manager he has placed himself outside the pale of engagements with all managers, there will come a sudden stop to these dishonorable sharp practices. Only the managers must agree. It will do no good for one or two to take this step; the movement must be general.

I wonder why some of our young lady friends do not take up the study of the harp? There is no more graceful position possible than that necessarily assumed by a harp-player, and there is no instrument which so exquisitely accompanies the voice. Much less time than is wasted upon the much-tortured

piano would make of a student a very graceful performer on this instrument.

Wagner is at work upon another opera. Dr. Hans von Bülow once said that "opera was dead, and Wagner was its last expression." The "last expression" is a pretty forcible one, at any rate; and a sick man with so much energy still at command would be thought to have strong chances of ultimate recovery.

P. S. Gilmore is the latest aspirant for the honor of giving to America her National Hymn. This will go to press before the public production of his work, so that I can of course say nothing as to his probabilities of success. But I should think that his Hymn, if it is what he claims, should be accepted with thanks and acclamations. "Yankee Doodle" is hardly a proper national air for a great people.

Here is what an experienced and able musician (Geo. A. Macfarren, of England) says of the study of counterpoint: "It is an exercise of the musician's mind, as useful for developing the power of thought and the ability to control it as is any mechanical exercise for developing muscular strength and other physical resources. Freethinkers deprecate it on the ground of its artificiality, pretending that its study is useless as a preparation of the modern composer for his task; but they ignore or they forget that discipline strengthens as much the mental as the moral power; that habitude to discipline is the best warrant of liberty; that he alone can successfully evade rules who is fully capable of obeying them; and that the ancient rules of counterpoint apply—if practically enlarged in their application—most stringently to the structure of music in the present day." This is worthy of careful consideration by our young would-be composers, who are far too apt to confound the liberty of a thoroughly studied musician with the license of their lawless ignorance.

I have been amused in watching the astonishing antics of a musical critic on one of our daily papers. He is so charmingly naïve. He writes as though music commenced only when he commenced writing, and as though his first hearing of a singer were that singer's first appearance. To find him gravely criticising a well-known local artist in the terms one would use of a "débutante," and patronizingly informing her that with study she will undoubtedly become in due time a very passable singer, is as amusing to the reader as it must be irritating to the artist; and to hear him seriously announce the "first performance" of an orchestral work which has been done here by Thomas at least three times already, is to be filled with wonder that so much combined ignorance and calm conceit should be contented with a mere position on a daily paper. He ought to write a book!

Musicians appear to be found of dabbling in business outside of, and entirely unconnected with, their profession; perhaps to prove that they are not such fools about the ordinary affairs of life as is popularly supposed. One of the latest examples of this tendency among professionals is perhaps the case of Verdi, the opera composer, who has a charming little farm at Bussetto, and amuses himself in his old age by breeding horses; naming his juvenile stock after the heroes and heroines of his almost innumerable operas. Fancy Aida being sworn at by an enraged Italian driver, and Nebuchadnezzar tied to a post!

Mme. Marimon, Mapleson's latest importation, although she cannot exactly say with Cæsar, "Veni, vidi, vici," can yet feel comfortably satisfied over her reception at her first appearance; although why a worn-out opera like "Sonnambula" was chosen for her début is a mystery. However, a large audience swallowed the old opera for the sake of the new singer. Large audiences have often before performed the same gustatory feat. To attempt to judge the lady's real artistic standing by her presentation of this flimsy opera (the only one given at this writing) would be folly. The one thing made plain was that she fully knew how to use her voice. Her execution is facile and sure, her upper notes exceedingly good and telling; and her phrasing tasteful.

CARYL FLORIO.